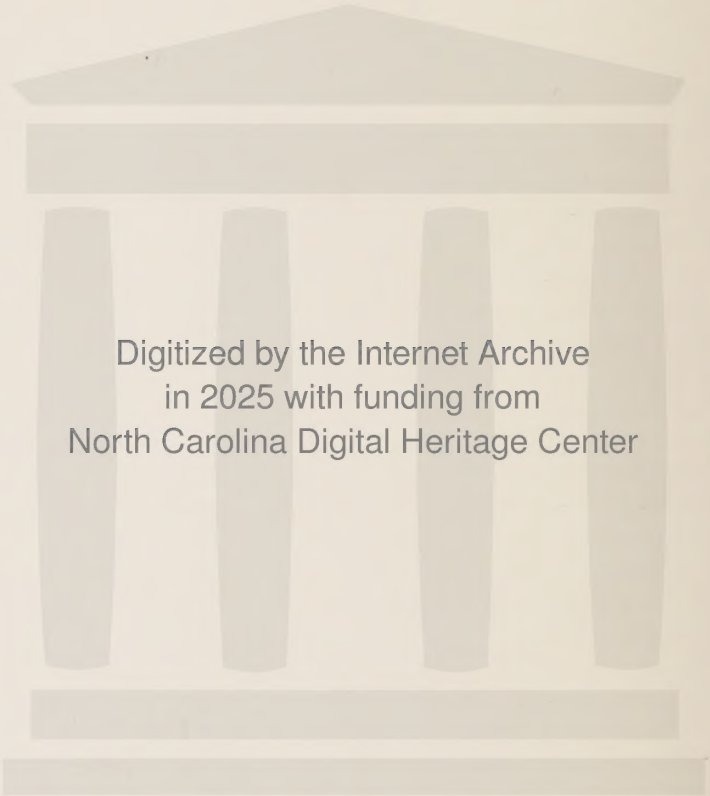
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# signet

WINTER 1974

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## ON TURNING AUTUMN

The day was as hot as red.
It's rust, orange and brown did not resemble summer.
It stuck like Scotch tape to our faces.
When the night turned to cool the air came unglued.
Next day it was yellow.

*Lisa Miller*

When we were children we always thought that Miss Dorothy was strange. She was not old but looked like she had been middle-aged all of her life. She wore her brown hair pulled tightly back from her face and tied with a faded grosgrain ribbon and gold wire glasses sat on her nose in a very authoritative manner. Miss Dorothy lived in the house next door to me, Mama and the rest of my family. It was a large Victorian gingercake house like the rest on the street only Miss Dorothy always had pots of flowers on the porch. In summer pale red geraniums nodded their heads in the afternoon heat, in Autumn bug-bitten Marigolds wilted in the clay pots. In Winter the pots stood empty except for sometimes when Miss Dorothy stuck a paper flower or two down into the dirt and left them to fade in the sun. Miss Dorothy seldom left the house and now and then from our porch we could see her gliding, through her window on our side of the house. She generally wore brown skirts and white blouses that were starched until the cuffs and collar shone. On special occasions like church and funerals she wore a green dress with a high organdy collar, but most of the time we thought of Miss Dorothy as brown and white.

Miss Dorothy came to our house now and then to borrow an egg or a cup of sugar but she always left after a few minutes standing impatiently on one foot and then the other. She said she had to hurry home to take care of her Mama or make Mama a pot of tea or to walk her Fox Terrier, Tiny. She seemed anxious to get home as though that were the only world she felt right in and, to tell the truth, she did look right only in that world of bric-a-brac, faded pink overstuffed chairs and heavy staring chiffarobes. Of course, the piano was there too because Miss Dorothy taught lessons. The only people who intruded on Miss Dorothy's world were her students - those who took piano or French. My sister went for piano and I for French on Tuesdays at two with regularity. While I conjugated verbs for Miss Dorothy, my sister practiced on the baby grand. I never liked going there for the lessons because the house was dark and smelled of old apples and camphor, but I liked making believe with the china figures on the round table while waiting for my sister to finish her lessons. I pretended that the china girls were ladies getting dressed for dances and the china horses were waiting to pull non-existent carriages to some great castle. There were no boy figures but I pretended that somewhere handsome frock-coated men were waiting to receive the ladies into their china arms. However, Miss Dorothy inevitably imposed herself on my fantasy with her soft command, "All right, Brenda, come in, hurry, hurry."

I remember one special day at Miss Dorothy's. She decided to have a Halloween party for her pupils. I was to read a poem in French and Sister was to play a Chopin Polonaise. Miss Dorothy greeted us in her green dress. We had oranges scooped out and filled with steaming sweet potatoes and raisins and orange juice to drink. I thought it was a wonderful treat but my sister didn't like raisins and hid them in her pocket.

One Christmas in a particularly cold December, Miss Dorothy played the Virgin Mary in a pageant at church. It was an outdoor pageant and she rode in on a donkey, looking scared to death. We noticed that she talked a lot to Joseph and smiled a lot too. Miss Dorothy never smiled much at us. Two days after the pageant I went to her house for my lesson. Miss Dorothy had on her green dress with the organdy collar and I knew it wasn't Sunday and I wondered who had died. "Miss Dorothy," I asked, "whose funeral are you going to?"

"Whose funeral? Why for heavens sake child, a lady goes out sometimes, doesn't she besides funerals?"

Her long skinny fingers rolled and pinched the collar of the dress.

"My friend, He, is coming for me in an hour."

My eyes grew large and I all of a sudden couldn't blink them.

"Get back to that verb, Brenda - at once." She looked nervously at her hands turning the palms up and down in her lap.

Every time we saw Miss Dorothy after that she made sure to say something about her friend. She always referred to him as "my friend, He". Soon her wardrobe increased to four dresses and I saw her wear all four of them - two were pink, one white and one blue - not one was brown or green. Sister and I saw her leave the house lots of times in a City Cab and when it occurred to us that she just might be going out with her friend, He, we were con-

sumed with curiosity. We soon noticed that there was a pattern - that she went out Tuesdays and Fridays without fail at seven and returned at nine thirty. When we heard the taxi horn we ran to the windows but only got a glimpse of the tail end of Miss Dorothy's dress as she sped away into the night. We talked and talked about all of the wonderful and interesting places they must be going. Once Sister asked, "Do you think they hug and kiss?"
"Of course not, Miss Dorothy's a lady," I answered but I wondered too.

Soon I could stand the suspense no longer. I must see her friend. I decided that I would hide in the bush by the wooden gate in front of Miss Dorothy's house and stay there until she came home. Friday night. I told Mama I was tired and going to bed early. I then arranged two pillows in my bed, one higher than the other, like my bottom sticking up, I turned off the light and shinnied down the post by my window and onto the cold hard ground. After I caught my breath, I took my place behind the bush. The night was getting colder and the wind began to burn the creases at the backs of my knees. My hands were numb and I dreaded that awful ache which would come when I got warm again. I passed the minutes by picking the red berries on the bush and squeezing the soft cold mushy insides between my thumb and forefinger. Soon the lights from an approaching car slowed and came to a stop right in front of the house and the yellow headlights shone into the bush. I bit my teeth into my knee in excitement. The driver opened the door and Miss Dorothy got out. I couldn't see anyone in the back seat - only Miss Dorothy who stepped out onto the curb.

"Well, night, Miss Dorothy," I heard. "Sure been nice of you to ride over the route with me these weeks and help me bone up on my French. Sorry they've moved my route. Glad I met you at the pageant, 'Mary'," he chuckled softly.

"Why, that's fine, Mr. Paul. I've liked it right much."

"Goodnight." The taxi started up and then suddenly stopped and the door flung open.

"Wait, here, how much do I owe you for your time?"

"Why indeed, Mr. Paul, nothing, it's been my very great pleasure." I could hear Miss Dorothy's voice change to a high crackling pitch.

Soon all that was left of He, the taxi and Miss Dorothy's fantasy were two red tail-lights vanishing into the distance.

I stayed quiet waiting for the door to slam so I could run home but soon I heard in the cold night the sound of a woman. When I lifted my head to look, I saw Miss Dorothy sitting on the steps, her knees drawn up under her chin, and holding her little dog.

"O Tiny," she moaned, "O Tiny, Tiny." That was all.

Mother couldn't understand when I quit my French lessons. I refused to go back for the lessons or even to return borrowed milk or thread, and when Tiny came barking in our yard, I always ran him away.

*Clara Seagrave*

## HAIKU

Shaking hands with Grandpa
Crumbling stale rye crackers
into lukewarm soup.

*Melanie Snow*

## PATCHWORK

My heart is worn and frayed
like the seat of my jeans
with only bare threads holding onto their existence
They've been washed, bleached and spun dry
as I climbed the tops of mountains
survived my first year of college
waded through streams
and said good-bye to the friends I'd met along the way.
Each day added new dimensions to
their slowly changing shapes
They've served me well and in return
I'll patch and repair them
embroidering a little love
back into their lives.

*Kim Kent*

## RITUAL

I'm angry now
a black virgin
vulnerable, vigilant
waiting in dusk
for the melody of nights before
when your hurried breath
burned
like moth wings
on the naked bulb overhead.

But only slung silence sifts
between us
growing like rootless trees
bearing ripe apples
without seeds.

And as ritual
you'll rock me between your thighs
and
come over me
like winds raping
this already-barren land.

*Sue Sublett*

## FRIENDS

A friend came and left today.
i think it's the last time.
We sat and talked
anxious to continue without
disturbing the sleeping canary
over the kitchen window.
The wind blew through the cage
catching both of us
off guard
the conversation remained
only slightly ruffled.
Something fluffed
i found myself alone
staring at the sleeping canary
The wind caught a thought

*Emily Nixon*

## CLINGING

The sea clung around my
pants leg
as if waiting to pull me back
with it.
i had to struggle against it
to keep from
falling
to keep from
falling
Minnows forced themselves
upon me
catching themselves within
my pants cuff
releasing themselves
with the next forceful blow
of waves and sand
i continued to stand there
The sea clung
clung like a dying hand.

*Emily Nixon*

We are a sheep that would prefer
to split its sides
on careless rock
without the help of
sheep-dog or of
shepherd.

We are a flock that much prefers
This -- our own way,
most content when strayed,
most at ease when
pastures are not
so green.

*Cyndy Anchors*

The sun comes underneath the sea,
comes smoothing suddenly
the fresh shadows of the field.

In the unbreakable burst of day
she forgets him
as the blossom forgets the earth.

Earlier, the dark sea firing in the vein
the shuddering intricacies of love,
she made the dark fish-bright.

Now, shadow, making all things one,
has ebbed with the closing of those acrid petals.
How blinding and multiple empties the sun!

*C.D.H. Reynolds*

## ON UNDERSTANDING ROMAN MYTHOLOGY

I can't remember her name but I read about her a few years ago -
  when I was a dreamer. (much more of one than I am now)
I was nauseated and bewildered
  seeing that delicate Renaissance face
                                smiling serenely
As she turned into a laurel tree.
I wanted the story to be romantic, but she spoiled it all
  by turning into a tree right when the guy got close enough to do
God knows what.
I used to believe that you would build me a house by the sea
with homemade whole wheat bread in the oven
  and I still don't know what
                          in the world
  happened to the bread.
I was baking it for you Sunday afternoon.
I think it molded because now it has
  little blue fuzzy lumps on it.
They look like you - fascinating, but
  to be avoided. Disease - carrying.
I think it would greatly benefit both of us
  if you would overwhelm me with some wild idea.
(I've been kidding myself too much today)
You know good and well that no sea will let you get near it!
  You've abused the privilege - I've got too much salt in my wounds.
(Fish die in bloody water.)
So forget about the house - it's certain to be washed away by a tidal wave.
I forgot about the bread.
Do me one favor and chase me just once
  I'm fungus infested and I understand about the tree.

*Melanie Snow*

In Denver snow fell in June
In heavy wet globs
On the copper roof.
The bread billowed
in the oven
And slowly fell

And conversations turned somber
Horses plodded in the street
Hooves sucking the pools of summer snow.

*Clara Seagrave*

## THE COUNTY FAIR

Your nose is your only guide from the main entrance down the midway that has the appearance of your local landfill at 5:00. The remains of a cheesburger have been crushed together with the core of a candy apple by the bare toes of a child. The smell is a mixture of hot dogs, cotton candy and cow manure from the livestock exhibit. An occasional, "Have a corn dog," or "How 'bout a nice footlong only 75¢" echos from the stands where the popcorn is popping like fleas jumping from a freshly bathed dog.

The games and amusements attack you from both sides and you wish the man who mutters "Git yer ladee a teddy bar to make 'er happee" would hush! Who would think that throwing three balls into an open commode would win a pair of Chinese handcuffs?

A quick turn reveals what seems to be the crowd waiting for the doors to open to a Moonlight Madness sale only it is the men instead of the women waiting for the bargains. Miss Boom Boom and Rocking Raquel wiggle like spaghetti cooling in a pot as they slide through the curtains.

The motor mouths of the con-men have finally choked as we return to the outside away from the world, stale as waxed fruit.

*Lisa Miller*

## GREENWOOD

You were greenwood, lover
Youngwood, bending.

You were strongwood, lover
Whose splinters were soft.

Let me rest now beneath
one bare greenlimb, lover,

To study the shape
of this ruin, this loss.

*Cyndy Anchors*

## PAULA AT MORNING

Paula in the Canary Islands
watches the sunlight on the water.
She can see
the first sunlight
  above the ocean. The first
fading of the stars.
The first rosy paleness
that casts itself against the mountains
  behind her.
She can see the paleness
gradually extend itself
into the deep clear night.
  And all around her
mountains become existent,
tangible expressions of the silence.
The bougainvillea
above her court becomes
                bougainvillea.
Below her house
the cliff drops steeply
                a quarter of a mile
to the reservoir.

Paula is a goddess
in her house above the reservoir
  above the sea.
She is
      a figure
in herself.
          A mystery.

She is the hour
when the scent of orange peels
gets on your fingertips.
The hour when the water
has not yet evaporated from the geraniums.
The hour when the leaves
rise out of the darkness into
the darkness of themselves.
And Paula
  is the combination
of the leaves with water
which is the silence in the light.

The light begins,
reddening the sea beyond Gomera.
The light begins
  in a glow like apples
turning into oranges.
And the sun becomes the sky.

A flare
    demanding
that the sky
become the sun.
The sun demanding
that the sky become Paula
who rises with the smell of oranges
on her fingertips, and walks
into this moment in Madrid
where we wait at a train station
and discuss Joseph Conrad.

*Paul B. Newman*

## LEAR

Were there but years to travel,
years to stretch across the aging face,
the blind would walk content then,
clinging to the maddened arm.
Were there no light--
light to hold against the dying sight,
the eyes would leave the vision,
find comfort in a fool's embrace,
        We two upon a timeless ground
        Would know the tales the songs
        That weave us into single thought.

Were there no dreams--
Dreams to rage against the grieving thought.
This age would come enduring,
Unfathered, yet content to rest.
Were there no dreams,
        but years and times undreamed
        alone we two in two
        would sing of earth more warm
                with sweetened thought,
                with sweetened sight,
                less damp than this.

    Were there but years.

*Cyndy Anchors*

## TWO MOUNTAIN SKETCHES

I

Circle pathless down
against a branch's winding
down against a pathless mountain
careless toward retreat
where roots find rest
and brace against a moss-held base
to sweat in sympathetic shade
and move against the spotting wind,
and leaves lie restless in this drying green.
Diving down a pathless mountain,
they circle toward retreat.

II

These land-hewn cliffs will cover me
And bluffs
will bow to seal all open space.

dark inward only rabbits lie
braced warm against intrusions
where thoughts lie breeding
with an earth-told rhythm.

Beneath the summer over me
Grey earth compressed and poured into
Concentric stone moves its
Rise and fall into a rooted age.

These land-hewn cliffs will comfort me.

*Cyndy Anchors*

## GUARDIAN

Henri squatted on a grassy hillock overlooking the crossroads. The afternoon sun beat down on his brown back and neck, trying to lull him to sleep, while he watched intently for any passers-by. An occasional breeze made the long grass slap his ankles, and the dust of the road danced in whirling spirals. Still squatting, he reached for the canteen on the ground beside him. He took a long drink from it, propped it uncapped against a rock, and began to unwrap the bandana from his head. Henri's short, curly hair was matted close to his head from the pressure of the bandana. Picking-up the canteen, he carefully wetted the cloth, twisted it into a rope, and wound it tightly around his head. He took another sip from his canteen before he stoppered it and set it back on the ground.

Henri stared carefully at the large mound of freshly turned earth before him. Only this morning the large, oblong area had been grass-green like the rest of the hillside. With each shovelful of earth brought to the surface, had come millions of dispossessed bugs, beetles, and worms; all trying frantically to burrow back into the coolness and safety of the solid earth. He and his little sister had thrown rocks at them, smashing a few, maiming others that ran into the grass dragging a broken leg or wing behind them. His aunt had caught them torturing a huge, black beetle with sticks, and scuffed them with her hard fists.

"Don't go to fooling with them things, now! We need them to do their work here. Now don't you be chasin' them away!"

They had stopped, of course. His aunt was to be obeyed, and right now he knew that his mamma didn't need anymore trouble. That's why he was there now, staring at his father's grave; guarding it. He smiled his little-man smile of pride and self-importance. He was the man now, and it was a man's job to guard the grave against the grave robber, who would try steal his father's corpse, and enslave the dead-man as his zombie.

Henri's uncle had been proud of him, to take on a job requiring such courage and devotion.

"You are young Henri, but you are a man; a son to make a father proud! When the flesh of the dead has begun to rot, you are free of your duty. Then return to your home for celebration."

The sun was low in the sky, and small clouds had begun to gather in the north. Birds were already singing their night songs, as Henri scanned the countryside for any person he could call a greeting to before darkness obscured everything. No one passed by. Henri sucked his piece of cane in silence as the last day-sound echoed between the hills and disappeared.

Crickets sang in the grass, playing hide-and-seek with their mates and the small, roving animals that would eat them. Dogs barked from the villages, where they rooted for food behind the huts. Henri thought of his own home and family, which was probably sharing dinner from the large iron pot. Then he thought about the dead-man in the ground beside him.

Henri shivered in the evening air. He was thankful that his sister had handed him a blanket in the morning. Now, he pulled it tight around himself. He stretched-out his legs, cramped from a day of squatting, and wiggled his toes in an effort to shake-off an ant. The tiny insect finally released its grip, and was tossed through the air, where it disappeared from sight. He stretched his legs a little farther, until the tops of his toes almost touched the mound of earth. He kept inching forward, little-by-little, until he suddenly realized what he was doing, and hurriedly drew his feet up under himself. The damp night air blew low over the ground, carrying along sweet smells from some other field to Henri. The clouds had begun to move across the moon, swallowing and vomiting it several times a minute. Henri wished the clouds

would leave the moon, and quite shutting-off its light; it was all darkness around him without it. He listened for cries of the hunting birds, and the flutter of bats in search of bugs. He glanced at his discarded piece of sugar-cane, which had been discovered by the ants. He quickly grabbed a heavy rock, and raised it in the air. . .

"Don't go to fooling with them things, now!"

Henri tossed the rock away in the grass. He lay back on his elbows, and gazed into the sky. The breeze had stopped. The clouds hid the moon and stars. Henri fixed them with the evil-eye, just for practice, because he knew hexes didn't work against such powerful forces. He closed his eyes for a moment, and took a deep breath. Suddenly the air caught within his chest. Carefully, he listened, and faintly, so faintly off in the distance, he heard heavy footsteps moving across the ground. He bolted up, staring into the darkness; seeing nothing. Around and around he spun, searching for a moving form. Closer came the footsteps, heavier, more deliberate; closer to Henri and the grave.

Then, into view plodded a column of men in rotting rags. Their hair hung in long, dirt-matted strands. Scraggy beards dropped from ashen faces, and yellow eyes stared from hollow sockets. Thin lips curled back from grey teeth. Bony knees, and elbows showed through rents in their shirts and trousers. Another man joined the group, and began handing-out tools to the men.

"Alright, now dig. Dig, I tell you! We'll have another friend for you tonight, my friends, if the worms haven't found him first!"

Henri rushed into the midst of living corpses, trying to scatter their tools in the grass.

"That's my father, leave him alone! Leave him alone! I won't let you do this! Go away!"

They stared at him with their dead-men's eyes.

"Go away! Leave me alone! It's my father!"

Their metal tools clicked against stones as they began to dig. Henri was sobbing as he tried again to wrestle a shovel from one's hand.

"You can't do this! He's my father!"

Henri drew a deep breath, and began to fix the dead-men with the evil-eye. He stared hard, his eyes bulging from their sockets, but the men kept digging. Someone groped for a rock in the grass.

"Leave my father alone! I'm guarding his grave!"

Two great fists held the rock over Henri; and in a fast movement brought it down hard on his head. He fell to the ground as his legs folded beneath him. A dark blob dribbled down his cheek, dropping-off on blades of grass.

"Say, it's a lucky night, my friends; the worms won't even get to nibble this one!"

The shovels bit deeper into the earth, coming closer to the body in the grave.

*Carol Vitek*

## EULOGY OF THE SELF-MADE MAN

Aren't we all familiar
With the stories
Of
Your rags-to-riches
Success?

How hard you worked
Hoeing, weeding
To make the money-tree
Grow
With your own hands,
Heart,
Until the leaves
Budded coins;
Marvelous medium
Of exchange.
Buying what you
Needed most for your existence;
People.

Feather-in-your-cap
He is;
Your ivy-league
Some-son,
Working his way
Through college
Panty-raids, and roadsters,
Frat parties, and beer.

The wife,
She, never liked it;
Having no flowers,
She hid your money-tree
Out back,
Where the neighbors couldn't
See;
Priceless,
Behind rhododendron, and honeysuckle;
The prettier things
In garden-life
Bought by the money-tree.

Angry grew
The money-tree,
Tapped
Without appreciation.

Justice
He asked
Of the gods
Of fruition:
"Take away
My
Inedible fruit!
Give me
Like-kind
In the living!"

The sky grew
Dark,
The branches
Shook;
One-by-one
The coins
Transformed;
Green
They turned,
From silver.

Wise
Is the man
Who
Cautious bites
Into Nature's
Green apple.

*Carol Vitek*

## AN APOLOGY TO MY SISTER AFTER GRANDMOTHER'S DEATH

"She was looking at the ceiling."

Afternoon:

Your scissored face
came first.
Panting!
Screaming!
into my arms.
I tried to soothe
away the edges.

Evening:

Your eyes
are flat.
Steamy gray water
still
in the tub.
I forgot to let it out.

(I saw a finch
smashing his guts
flying through glass;
I know the truth
about the sky.)

Night:

Your mouth
is a bird
even now.
Quivering
in the dark.

Forgive me.

*Melanie Snow*

This game of ours has got to stop
Twice now your mother's caught me telling you
that I live in the laundry chute
and come out only Thursdays for
a breath of air and change of clothes.

I think we are both changelings though,
The other side, well-satisfied with their exchange
has left us here, we're found too much at windows
after dusk and think too long on cavern worlds
they trust all wingless ponies are earthbound
because of age and therefore think no more on fairydust.

It is a pitied Middle Earth that leaves us,
Yet, no matter that no one believes us.
We can wait on golden apples and be pleased
with these their air has changed to duller red.
Forget the mossy burrow ledge and lean
on brownstone walls instead of magic stone.
And, if you chose, here re-create a tale or two
from caverns of our own.

*Cyndy Anchors*

## MISPLACED

I traced the picture
in my mind
a thousand different times
In the hopes that some fragment
might remain
Until it could be captured
on canvas, paper
anything
Holding forever
the beauty of that moment
Now I can share it only in
writing
for the images are lost
But I pray that someone
somewhere,
can see
Through words
to search my mind

for that one misplaced
moment
of my life.

*Kim Kent*

## LEAVING

You left last night
with the black angus gliding in grey grass
to clump beneath wind-sprinkled willows,
to warm in the morning's sun
and
in me
Now
disillusioned fingers of dust
climb
through
the rain-speckled screen
to settle
on the cool pillow
beside me.

*Sue Sublett*

## THE SEA

The sea ran to catch the lonely
walkers
before they ended their midnight
prowl
afraid that it would never be
able to surround
them again
The stars watched as the
sea
continued to run back-and-forth
in its attempt to catch
the lonely walkers.
The sun rose
diminishing the light from the stars.
Birds began to sing
joining the lonely
walkers
on the deserted beach
The sea shone
while it continued to grasp
for one final hold
on the lonely walkers
before the entire beach overflowed.
The sea wanted to be
reassured
of its lasting hold
on the lonely walkers
who were touched with the
strength
of the sea.
Each had become a symbol to
the other
One would leave
the others would continue.

*Emily Nixon*

## KEEPER

Damn you!
I am not some king-sized mouse,
Easily captured under a sensitive paw,
Ready to squirm and squeak in fear of my very life!

No!
Nor is mine the soul of some free-flying bird,
Caught unawares while singing for the glory of beetles and worms;
Now a mat of twisted feathers blown into a corner by the wind!

Why,
I'm not even near kin to the bulgy-eyed bubble-blower
Who sits in his globe,
Spitting-out gravel in search for food
Until any shadow over his world drives him behind a shell,
And safety.

See!
You can't threaten me,
Four paws against
Two hands,
Two feet.
My mind,
Against yours.
Ha!

Who do you think you are?
No. . .
What;
That you can flip-out one paw,
And hold me here,
Forever.

*Carol Vitek*

## GORGON

I am the Gorgon.
Sirens fear me.
Men can resist sirens
Waxing/taxing their ears.
Men are clay.
I am stone.

I am the dark.
Women fear me.
Men can resist
women.
All men are
fools.

I am the pain.
Women in my clutch cry.
Men bear my arms
as chains.
Mock bravery.

I am:
Death.
Theorized.
Analysed.
Categorized.
Despised.

I am
the salty tongue that sizzles
into your wounds.
I am
Loki
Wizard of Lies.

I give you guilt.
I eat
your innocence
daily.

I am
your sneering
conscience.
Invisible
but inevitable.
All men are
fools.

*Melanie Snow*

## PRELUDE

Let me speak to you women
restless yet
unbreathing
a savage seething
Let me speak to you women
a mesh of tears
for sterile blood
dripping
from your secret places
in stealth,
in staccato rhythms.
Let me speak to you women
scattering children piecemeal
loose and empty
from your black crotches
shattering like dead leaves
Please
Let me speak to you women
restless
still unbreathing.

*Sue Sublett*

You came to visit me at work
hoping i would not notice the
swollen eyes
and the nervous
twitch of your hands.
Your makeup was streaked
beyond control
distorting your beauty
Your smile was not
your smile
You moved in slow motion
as if attempting to halt
something
You spoke often
but never looked me directly
in the eyes
as i have become
accustomed to your doing.

You wanted understanding
without questions
and even more without
sympathy
i gave as best i could
but you left
hoping i would
forgive
without condemning
without rejecting
the love you held within.

*Emily Nixon*

## YOU CROSSED THE RIVER
(for the death of a sister)

You crossed the river
at the blue fork
parting wood and grassland
and waded through bowing barley
humming in wind-song.
Your guitar slapped one denim leg
echoing muffled twangs of shivering strings
with each step
and
Isaiah, priest of all dogs, plowed ahead
in golden heyday
sniffling daisy-cups
and nuzzling pine needles
with a moist nose.
And you
my sister sang your song
with the cry of the crow
a shrill woodsong.

With prophet's eyes
you crossed the river
at the blue fork
and followed the shadow of your song's echo
into dusk.
And as you fell from that green hill
that was a mountain
the crows cawed into the stillness.

*Sue Sublett*

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